

a composed, calm, and patient manner; which is to be admired in a position so demanding.

Brian grew up in the Nashville, Tennessee area and then moved to Mississippi where he attended Northwest Rankin High School. Once in Mississippi, he settled there and graduated from Belhaven College in 1997 with a bachelor of arts in philosophy and then obtained a masters in communication from Mississippi College. Before starting in my office, Brian was a reporter for the Madison County Journal, creator and editor of the Magnolia Report, and campaign director for Judge Keith Starrett's successful run for election. His personal experience as a journalist helped make him a very effective communications director for me.

In addition to serving as my communications director, Brian also focused on education, human rights, and religious freedom issues. In 2006, Brian moved back to Mississippi to work in my district office in Pearl. We have missed having Brian in the DC office.

Since moving back to Mississippi, Brian has been extremely involved in neighborhood and community activities. He is a loyal alumnus of Belhaven, living just one block from the school. Canoeing, fishing, and camping are among his favorite outdoor activities. He also enjoys listening to bluegrass, grilling with friends, and attending the Neshoba County Fair. Over the past 2 years, the district office has come to really know Brian and will remember him as an ardent 1st amendment defender, Christian advocate, political junkie, and the world's fastest eater. But most significantly, he will be remembered as a dedicated and conscientious member of my staff, a good listener, and a loyal friend to his fellow co-workers.

As a tribute to Brian for his exemplary work, I would like to share some words from people he has worked closely with throughout his career.

"Brian Perry's five year tenure in Congressman Pickering's office is noteworthy, as his record of public service is marked by a strong commitment to excellence and professionalism. Personally, I am grateful for Brian's willingness to serve as the spokesman for my 2007 re-election campaign; his vision, maturity, and experience were nothing short of exceptional. I commend Brian for his outstanding career and look forward to his continued contributions to government and politics."—Governor Haley Barbour

"Brian Perry has served Congressman Pickering and the Third District with distinction. He is a man of unwavering conviction and his integrity is above reproach. That's why it is my distinct privilege to count Brian among my closest and most trusted friends, a relationship that has developed as I have worked with him professionally. He's always been willing and able to meet the request of our newspapers—and then some. He has always proven to be of the strongest character when dealing with members of the press."—James E. Prince III, president, Prince Newspapers

"Brian Perry has been one of my closest and most trusted friends for well over a decade. We both met as activists in the Mississippi Republican Party. He has served as a loyal member of Congressman Chip Pickering's staff where he facilitated and communicated the various initiatives Congressman Pickering spearheaded in the interest of Mississippi's Third Congressional District. While serving as Republican Chairman of the Third District, and now as MRP Executive Director, Brian has proven himself

over and over again to be a man of character whose integrity and professionalism are above reproach. Brian's mark of service to the Republican Party, Congressman Pickering, and Mississippi and even the nation will be long lasting."—Brad White, executive director, Mississippi Republican Party

"Brian Perry worked very hard ensuring that the needs of rural areas were addressed along with the many other demands placed on Congress. He took a personal interest in the progress of Noxubee County and assisted us whenever possible. Brian's attention to detail and pride in his work was evident whether at his desk in the Cannon Building or during a much-deserved weekend break to fish the Shenandoah River. Brian Perry's presence on the Hill will be greatly missed by many Mississippians."—Brian Wilson, executive director, Noxubee Economic and Community Development Alliance

"It has truly been a pleasure to get to know Brian Perry during his tenure with Chip. He and I have developed a special friendship. I appreciate his intellect and character. He is an excellent writer and conscientious in his work. His public service has made a difference to our nation, our great state, and to Chip and our family. I will always be grateful."—Judge Charles W. Pickering, Sr.

Madam Speaker, Brian has provided wise counsel, effective communication and a passion for service to Mississippi. He served with poise throughout the aftermath of Katrina and in congressional and confirmation battles. I treasure his faith, reason and friendship. He has my deep respect and appreciation for all the contributions he has made and the work he has done. I wish him the very best and know he has a bright future communicating and fighting for good causes.

CONGRATULATING ISRAEL ON ITS 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

HON. JOHN M. MCHUGH

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Mr. MCHUGH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and commend the State of Israel on the 60th anniversary of its independence. On May 14, 1948, Israel declared its independence. Within 11 minutes, the United States became the first nation to give de facto recognition to the State of Israel. America's friendship with Israel continues to this day. Having visited Israel several times, I know well that Israelis and Americans share the common values of peace, freedom and democracy.

The modern state of Israel is a safe haven for Jews from all corners of the world. Since its founding, Israel has been a home to Holocaust survivors and their descendants, as well as Jews fleeing oppression. While strides have been made to combat global anti-Semitism, I am disappointed that recent reports indicate a rise in anti-Semitism worldwide.

A strong and secure Israel is vital to America's national interest. Israelis know all too well the terror of indiscriminate homicide attacks by radical terrorists. The enemies of Israel have also targeted their attacks against Americans. The terrorist group Hamas is responsible for the deaths of at least 26 Americans, including teenagers and young children. In 1983 Hezbollah bombed the U.S. embassy in Bei-

rut. Hezbollah was also involved in the bombing of the United States Marine barracks, in an attack that claimed the lives of 241 American servicemen. These groups operate with support and funding from Iran, a country whose president has called for Israel to be "wiped off the map." Hamas continues to launch rockets into Israel, terrorizing innocent civilians living near the Gaza border. However, Israelis have shown tremendous courage in the face of these hostilities. Despite the constant threat of annihilation, Israelis have made the desert bloom. They have created a flourishing culture and society. Israel has also developed a thriving economy and is the world's leader in the development of many cutting edge industries. Israeli technology has even been used to help keep our troops safe in battle in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Madam Speaker, I join my colleagues in congratulating the State of Israel on its 60th anniversary, and express my sincere hope that the next 60 years come with peace and security for our close friend and ally.

CALLING ON CONGRESS TO REPEAL THE GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET AND WINDFALL ELIMINATION PROVISION

HON. WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Mr. DELAHUNT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about an extremely important issue facing many retirees in Massachusetts. Throughout my career in the Congress, I have heard from thousands of my constituents who have been penalized by the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

Both of these laws currently require that a modified formula be used to calculate the amount of Social Security benefits a retired or disabled worker and/or the worker's family will receive if the worker also receives a pension from local, State or Federal employment not covered by Social Security. This has resulted in some unintended and unfair consequences.

Millions of public service workers in 15 States are allowed to opt out of the Social Security system and my home State of Massachusetts is one of them. Most of these workers are teachers, town and State employees, nurses, police officers and firefighters who are not required or allowed to pay into the Social Security program. Therefore, they do not collect Social Security benefits upon retirement.

However, the GPO and WEP also prevent public servants from receiving Social Security benefits that they earned through other, non-public service employment. Under these provisions, a widow or widower is denied a spousal benefit because their husband or wife was a public service employee. This is unfair and unacceptable.

Every year those who unselfishly give of themselves by serving others in their communities, find their retirement savings slashed by the GPO and WEP, simply because they left the private sector to serve the public. In Massachusetts alone, nearly 18,700 retirees are affected by the GPO, with more than a third of them being widows or widowers. As many as 32,000 individuals are affected by the WEP.

These provisions are unfairly penalizing the men and women who contribute the vital services that sustain and improve our communities.

With the retirement population continuing to grow, this issue is of increasing importance to millions of Americans and is not going to go away. I have been contacted by thousands, representing every segment of our community, and I am continually saddened and angered by the stories that I hear. Those who are affected by the GPO and WEP are hardworking Americans that do not deserve to be denied the benefits of a Social Security system that they have already contributed to.

A widow relayed the story of how she and her husband planned their retirement believing that each would be able to take care of their bills should one of them pass. She was stunned to find out when she became widowed that she would not be allowed to collect her husband's full survivor benefits because she collects a small pension from her job as an elementary school teacher in Marshfield. Sadly, she was forced to sell the home where she had raised her family because she could no longer afford it.

A single mother of three on Cape Cod with two full-time jobs as a nurse and teacher wrote me of her dilemma. She has made many sacrifices to independently support her children. She consistently paid into her teacher's retirement fund and Social Security for decades hoping to be able to eventually retire without worry in her later years. She recently found out she will not be allowed to collect both of the full retirement benefits she earned and was counting on.

I have heard from a 63-year-old widow who works for the City of Quincy. She would like to retire before her 70th birthday but cannot afford to do so. Because of her participation in the City retirement program, her Social Security benefits will be immediately and drastically reduced.

A municipal retiree in Plymouth wrote me about his concerns with the rising price of gas and medical expenses. He supports a repeal of the GPO and WEP so that he may supplement his already meager retirement income with his Social Security benefits.

I have heard from police officers and firefighters from all over my district who put their lives on the line each and every day. These brave men and women will not be allowed to collect their full Social Security benefits upon retirement.

These stories are very real, and are just a small sample of the thousands of letters that I have received on this issue.

This is not just about senior citizens who worked all their lives believing they were responsibly planning ahead for retirement. This is not just about retirees finding themselves unable to make ends meet, concerned that they may not be able to afford to heat their homes this winter or buy the medications they need.

It's about retired and widowed public servants, who are denied access to their deceased spouse's Social Security benefits because they chose public service as a career.

It's about penalizing honest, hard-working people who dedicated their careers to public service. At a time when our Nation is searching for talented and dedicated teachers, nurses and other public servants—this penalty discourages the best and the brightest from

serving in our community. Madam Speaker, the time is long overdue for Congress to resolve this issue.

I want to urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act which would repeal both the GPO and WEP. In addition, I'd like to urge you to support H.R. 2772, the Public Servant Retirement Protection Act, which would eliminate the WEP and establish a more equitable formula for calculating Social Security benefits.

Support for these two pieces of legislation has grown significantly each year and it is imperative that they see long-awaited debate in committee and on the floor of Congress.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CONGRESSWOMAN MAXINE WATERS TO SOUTH AFRICA

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS on receiving the Order of the Companions of OR Tambo Silver Award.

Since 1980, Congresswoman WATERS has worked tirelessly to improve the situation of the South African people. During the long reign of the apartheid regime, Representative WATERS organized marches, participated in rallies and welcomed countless antiapartheid leaders to the United States. Spearheading the national divestment movement, Congresswoman WATERS persuaded countless American corporations to withhold investing money in South Africa until apartheid ceased to exist. When South Africa held its first free elections 1994, Representative WATERS was asked to be a member of the official U.S. delegation that attended the inauguration of the country's first black president, Nelson Mandela. Clearly, Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS played a vital role in ending apartheid.

In my opinion, there is no one more deserving of one of South Africa's most prestigious awards. Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS devoted her career to ensuring that all people no matter their origin, race or culture, have the chance to experience freedom.

IN HONOR OF GABRIELLE THOMPSON OF BUFFALO, MINNESOTA: RECIPIENT OF THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARD

HON. MICHELE BACHMANN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend seventh grader Gabrielle Thompson of Buffalo Community Middle School for her extraordinary commitment to her community and her compassion for young cancer patients. This week, Gabrielle will be one of only 102 state honorees from across the Nation honored with the Prudential Spirit of Community Award.

Gabrielle has turned a difficult personal story into a story of healing and hope for chil-

dren facing a life with cancer. When she was only 4 years old, doctors removed a malignant tumor from Gabrielle's abdomen. Now, with that successful surgery not long behind her, Gabrielle has committed to helping others who find themselves in similar situations.

In addition to raising \$5,000 for cancer research selling luminaries and to drawing public attention to Buffalo's Relay for Life, Gabrielle has written a book to help children cope with cancer, "The ABCs of Childhood Cancer." Her book relates to children as only a young one can and relates to cancer patients as only one who has walked in their shoes can. But, in so many ways, her book demonstrates a young lady of startling maturity, grace, and poise.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards were started in 1995 as a partnership between Prudential Financial and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). It is the Nation's largest youth recognition program based solely on volunteerism. Two high school and middle school students from each state and the District of Columbia are honored each year, with an additional 234 distinguished finalists also receiving recognition for their public service.

This year, in addition to Gabrielle, Shanna Decker, a senior at Plainview-Elgin-Millville High School, will represent the great state of Minnesota as recipients of the award for 2008. Shanna has also had a personal experience with cancer as a young child and has also turned her difficult life lesson into a powerful example of hope and courage for other young people in this situation, spending more than 300 hours a year visiting young cancer patients in the hospital.

An additional six outstanding Minnesota teens will be honored as Distinguished Finalists: Daniel Chahla of St. Paul, Carly Fischbeck of Inver Grove Heights, Joshua Hiben of Bloomington, Carissa Loehr of Eagan, Laura Maciosek of Minneapolis, and Aisha Moghul of Fridley. It is a true privilege to join Prudential, the NASSP, and their communities in honoring these outstanding examples of compassion and service. With all the regrettable news stories about the wayward path of today's youth, these young men and women renew our faith and refresh our hope.

HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MR. THOMAS J. COOPER, SR.

HON. JIM GERLACH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Mr. GERLACH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a dedicated community volunteer from Chester County, Pennsylvania, who recently passed away, but whose service is still lauded and remembered.

Each year, the Downingtown Area Chamber of Commerce recognizes an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the community. This year, the Citizen of the Year Award will be presented posthumously to Thomas J. Cooper, Sr.

Mr. Cooper made substantial contributions to several community organizations throughout our region. He was very active with the Boy Scouts of America, serving as a Cubmaster and Den Leader for Hopewell Pack 8 for a